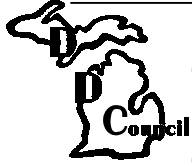


The



Monday Update

April, 2004

Published by the Michigan Council on Developmental Disabilities, Lewis Cass Building,
Lansing, MI 48913

Confronts rift between IDEA, NCLB

Universal education is key issue for all students, all the time

Today in Michigan, there are individuals and groups who are taking public education beyond the traditional boundaries of inclusion for students with disabilities. They call it universal education. These advocates expect to change the way education is provided. At the heart of this systems change is community.

It is public schools that help provide people in a community with a sense of ownership. For many people, the school may be their only contact with the community-at-large. Schools can help dilute the sense of isolation that seems to be taking over America today.

The successes of a school – team championship, new building, student awards – are seen as community successes shared by everyone. Schools require the practice of democracy in order to operate.

That so many can join in this process helps them feel a part of the community. Universal education must become a part of the school and the community.

DD Council is there

When it comes to universal education, the DD Council has long recognized the need

for changes in school systems and has supported this recognition with over \$3 million in grants.

Among the grants are Good Start in Calhoun and Washtenaw Counties and Community Village in Kalamazoo County. The latest program, Everyone Together, is discussed below.

In the process of advocating for changes in the methods by which schools view and isolate students with disabilities, state advocates, including those working with Everyone Together, have found two programs conflicting within the federal government itself.

This conflict of basic policies is both financial and social and may get in the way of universal education progress.

Gains compromised?

The federal conflict of educational policies between federal laws that were created to (1) make certain children with disabilities, or any child for that matter, receive their education in America's mainstream school classrooms, "all together, all the time," against (2) continual improvement in the quality of education in the country's school systems.

The conflict asks the question: are the legal and moral gains in making every classroom available to every child being

compromised by federal requirements that every school raise its student test scores?

How will this policy affect universal education in Michigan? Here are the two laws that may collide in being fulfilled.

The laws in conflict?

Every advocate, self-advocate for universal education and parent of a child with disabilities is aware of the federal law called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

If IDEA's mandates just may be in conflict with another important federal program called No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, it may not be much of a surprise. NCLB is President Bush's recent legislation intended to improve student performance in all schools.

To improve this performance, teachers and administrators may have to put IDEA on the back burner and universal education might have to wait in the wings.

IDEA went into effect in 1975. It opened the door for schools to educate kids with disabilities and other students, mostly in "special education" classes.

That was at a time when many schools wouldn't let "special" kids in the front door, let alone into classrooms created just for them. Instead, these children mostly were in institutions, so IDEA was a major breakthrough.

The IDEA law was revised in 1997. There are five basic objectives for IDEA:

1. Raise expectations for children with disabilities;
2. Increase parents' involvement in their kids' education;
3. Make sure regular education teachers invest in planning the progress of all their students;

4. Be certain that all the educators who work with kids with disabilities are well trained; and, maybe most interesting of all;

5. Include children with disabilities in all of a school's performance measures – make certain these children are part of the data that determine a school's successes, finances and its public face.

At the heart of IDEA are basic civil rights. All students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment possible. This environment must, says IDEA, be based on the student's learning and testing results, rather than a kind of separate-but-equal arrangement that supposedly benefits the student.

IDEA is currently under reauthorization in Congress and under great criticism from parents and other advocates for it proposed changes. Contents of the final act revision may be a giant step backward.

NCLB has done an excellent job of focusing America's attention on education, of pointing out that much of today's education is aimed at a non-existent average child in a typical average school in average, mainstream America.

No Child Left Behind is a well-received law that takes schools to task for their educational quality. All schools are accountable for testing their students to see how they have improved since the last school year.

Improve every year

Test scores from different levels and classes are combined to give each school an overall score. Every school is expected to improve its scores every year. Schools that do poorly on their scores lose money.

They may also lose students as their parents take them out of low-score schools and put them in those with higher test scores.

Is it possible that some kids with disabilities or language problems might not do well on these tests? Is it also possible that these lower test scores provided by children with disabilities and other learning difficulties might lower the collective scores of a school?

If that is the case, then it might be better, from the standpoint of some schools, to put children with disabilities and those with other learning challenges in separate, special classrooms with a different system of testing...so as not to diminish the overall NCLB-mandated test scores.

That seems to conflict with IDEA's idea of children with disabilities being included in the schools' performance reports. The U.S. Department of Education describes this particular IDEA objective as, *"Including children with disabilities in assessments, performance goals, and reports to the public."*

That would seem to preclude keeping these children out of regular classrooms in order to keep NCLB-mandated test scores on the rise.

The solution

The glass, as it said, is half full. Two elements may keep this collision between federal laws from ever happening: highly qualified, inclusion-minded educators, and energetic, focused grassroots advocates. If that is the case, the result well could be true universal education.

The term "universal education" advocates the same goals as IDEA, but it is a grassroots effort generated by parents, advocates, concerned educators and self-advocates who have been through the system and can see the need for change.

Fully aware of the possible loss of inclusion in the general school makeup, these parents, advocates and self-advocates

in Michigan are working hard to make certain universal education is part of every education experience in this state. Activities can range from encouraging university teaching degree programs to include classes and forums on inclusive education, to showing to school administrators that classes "all children, all together" can actually be less expensive by reducing duplicate services and resources.

These include organizations that promote whole schooling. "Following central problems that deepen our social and individual problems: segregation of children based on ability, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and other characteristics" is a goal of one whole schooling organization.

Another, similar concept

Whole schooling advocates are very active in Michigan. They advocate for complete inclusion and believe in cooperative learning environments and teacher access to resources that explain exactly how to create an inclusive teaching plan. Whole schooling campaigners believe "that changes in the conduct of general education classroom teaching must take place before the dream of effective, inclusive education for all students can be realized."

There are other excellent advocacy groups promoting universal education. A major effort has been in place for years. That is the DD Council's Education Work Group. Its activities are many and include monitoring changes in Michigan public education, as well as Council education projects. For more information on this active work group, contact **Bud Kraft** at the Council office, 517-334-7298, kraft@michigan.gov.

People are rallying to the inclusion banner, such as individual educators, school board members, lots of parents of kids with disabilities, and professionals at the state and local levels, among others.

More and more policymakers are being made aware of the shortfalls in education parity. Universal education is tangible goal well within sight.

Things are changing: when it comes to opening classrooms to all students in Michigan, so the term “universal education” means a lot to the future of this state. Happily, education is on the minds of lots of Americans today, maybe even more than in the past, maybe due in part to NCLB. Parents, educators, students, politicians and taxpayers are all involved in directing major changes in education in this country.

Typing “universal education” into an Internet search engine will yield mostly websites devoted to United Nations efforts on a worldwide basis. One site mentioned somewhat down the list belongs to the above-mentioned Everyone Together.

Everyone Together

A recent project that is monitored by the DD Council’s Education Work Group is Everyone Together, an organization with an advisory council and networks across the state.

It was formed by UCP Michigan and UCP Metro Detroit through a five-year grant from the Michigan DD Council. It is a good bet that Everyone Together can make a difference in diluting the negative effects of IDEA vs. NCLB. Director of the project is **Linda Potter** of UCP Michigan.

Managing Everyone Together’s daily work are **Laurie Stein** of Forest Hills near Grand Rapids and **Carolyn Das** of Farmington, both parents of children with disabilities and both very familiar with the ongoing battle for school inclusion.

Das says the structure of the project includes an advisory council that combines “professionals, educators, parents and even charter school consultants – quite a variety of people.” The address of their new

website is: www.everyonetgether.org. Most of the site is still under construction.

Everyone Together is, says its website, “a coalition of parent networks across Michigan.” This network coalition prides itself on its diversity in location, ethnicity, race and culture. The networks are “united in our mission to achieve an educational system that embraces Universal Education; a Michigan Model for educating All children, All together, All the time.”

At the core of Everyone Together’s drive and commitment are three documents. They are:

1. All Children, All Together, All the Time – a position paper. It states Everyone Together is committed to universal education and to working toward this goal within the state’s school systems.
2. Universal Education: A Design for Living – a concept paper. This paper offers the group’s definition of universal education and states that it “embraces techniques like authentic multi-level teaching and differentiated instruction so that classrooms are inherently designed to meet the needs of all our diverse learners without ability groupings and pull-out programs.”
3. Effective Practices for Universal Education. A list of necessary practices underscoring the group’s belief that change can only come by working within the school systems.

Besides the advisory council, Everyone Together is an organized collection of 16 networks, made up mostly of parents, across the state. The objective of the networks is to develop local community leadership, the objective being universal education. Long term is to establish a self-sustaining organization that localizes and solves inclusion issues.

The Plan says so

According to the DD Council's Five-Year Strategic Plan, Everyone Together intends to "build demand for inclusive education. The project is promoting Universal Education as a way to create flexible educational settings for ALL students...." Local events and workshops – three for each network in the first two years - will be featured.

The Everyone Together project's advisory council plans to produce a report explaining how the principles of universal education can support the best intentions of NCLB. Target audiences for the report include educators and government policymakers.

To learn more about Everyone Together's the organization is holding a one-day conference in Lansing on Saturday, May 15. It's titled "We, Too, Have A Dream" and features Dr. Alice Udvari-Solner from the University of Wisconsin. Conference site is Holiday Inn West. For more information and a brochure on the conference, or universal education in general, call 800-828-2714.

Lauri Stein, the parent of a son with a disability, points out that the job of building demand is a big one. "Children with disabilities ages five to 15 in Michigan," she says, "translates to well over 108,000 kids. That's over 6.6 percent of the population. That is a lot of kids who need including."

'Doing just fine'

Stein said until the systems change, it's a long, uphill battle for parents and children and she's been there. "We can talk until we're blue in the face – let our kids in, let our kids in – and there are a lot of closed doors. We started fighting for our son Gene when he was four years old. He's in the eighth grade now, in a regular classroom and doing just fine and we can say we won."

The battle was one-on-one. Each family that wishes to enroll their child in school, even with the help of supports, becomes a new experience for the school system.

Once her son Gene was in school, most of the doors that opened to the supports system had to be opened by Stein herself. She says it was Partners in Policymaking that gave focus and showed her where the system supports were hidden in their own systems.

Thus, one of the goals of universal education is to make inclusion a school policy.

"Otherwise, it's just one kid at a time. It's never about the schools changing how they do business," says Stein. She adds that another task Everyone Together has is establishing how universal education can meet the needs of NCLB.

A definition?

The DD Council grant project's definition of universal education is: "An approach to education that creates learning environments which are inherently designed for diversity, thus making natural educational settings accessible to all children, all together, all the time." However, states Das, universal education must not be viewed as a short-term fix.

This philosophy compliments the goal of each school principal: pass the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test with flying colors and achieve the mandate of NCLB. Stein notes there has been an observational test created for children with disabilities, but schools are still concerned about what effect these children will have on testing performance in the classroom.

Money is a problem

She adds that the present economy also plays a role in universal education – many

school systems do not have the funds to purchase necessary supports. “It’s harder to make changes when there isn’t any money,” she observes. “The bottom line becomes a lot smaller.”

Carolyn Das, who is also the parent of a son with disabilities, says it even simpler: “There is a strong bias for exclusion of students with disabilities and/or learning issues in general.” Everything within a school is set up to exclude. “The focus on high-stakes standardized testing processes and scores,” helps fuel the process of exclusion.

This testing mentality makes schools want to “turn out little CEOs.” Das says it’s all about “high scores and money,” rather than educating children to their maximum potential. “It makes broad assumptions about children being at ‘grade level.’”

How then can universal education save schools money? Is it far less expensive to have combined classrooms? Can a school just turn out the lights and put the kids in the general classroom?

Not just about a disability

The concept of universal education is also, with advocacy such as Everyone Together supporting it, an approach teachers may buy into because it’s not just about a child with a disability that the teacher must figure out how to do things for.

This has to be scary for the teachers. Universal education may be something the teacher will want to try because it’s going to help all the kids and conform to the law by providing the least restrictive setting for the kids with disabilities.

“We see universal education as being the key to achieving inclusive education,” Das concludes. It’s all about helping all kids; kids who fall through the cracks, kids with disabilities, even special and gifted kids who have many of the same issues.

There is another element that must be considered in working toward all children, all the time. According to Stein, that is the presence of parents who do not wish their children to be in a regular classroom. “The school has convinced them that their way is the right way. Also, parents may be worried about the child’s safety and whether or not they’ll learn.”

So, these parents prefer, if they send their children to a regular school at all, that instruction take place in a separate setting. Or, they may even wish for their son or daughter to be schooled in an institution. Part of this is personal preference for many reasons.

One major stumbling block may be that advocacy and supports groups that first contact parents of a child with disabilities may not promote inclusion. “When the first supporting words you might hear are some form of ‘separate but equal,’” that can be tough to overcome later. Usually, though, it’s just a matter of asking for the name of a group that supports inclusion,” Stein states.

Then, recalling her own family’s experience, there are parents who have never been contacted and no idea what is available in the way of supports.

This may have happened for many reasons, including the specter of cultural differences that can prevent parents from seeking assistance because of language or a variety of other reasons.

Whatever the reason, these parents may not understand the value of universal education when their child enters the school system.

Plant to travel to UCP Michigan’s transportation conference

Everyone Travels! is the name of a one-day advocacy conference coming to Lansing's Radisson Hotel on Monday, May 3. Anyone, and everyone, interested in improving transportation services in their community should think about attending the conference, then signing up for it.

The conference is organized by UCP Michigan and the Everyone Travels grant from the DD Council. Keynote speaker for the conference is Gloria Jeff, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation. Regional coalition building, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and building better Local Advisory Councils are among the subjects to be covered.

Registration is free for transit riders and consumers, and \$50 for professionals. For more information, contact UCP Michigan at 800-828-2714, or visit its website at: www.ucpmichigan.org.

Everyone with an interest in improving Michigan transportation will be there. Please join us.

Grants information; it's all there on the web

DD Council grant information, including the necessary forms and maps, is now available on the Council's website at www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil.

Currently listed on the site are the 2004 RICC Mini-Grants. On this page are the Request for Proposals, instructions, supplemental information, a map to the Council office, and details of the 2004 Grant Writers' Academy.

Questions or comments about the website? Contact Rick Van Horn at vanhornr@michigan.gov.

Photo shoot: DD Council's Annual Legislative Reception!

The DD Council's Annual Legislative Reception was, by every measure, a success, even in bad weather.

The annual gathering at Lansing's Radisson Hotel on Feb. 10 offered members of Regional Interagency Coordinating Committees (RICCs) from around the state to meet with legislators and their staffs for a one-on-one exchange of issues and news that concern people with disabilities in Michigan.

A total of 138 RICC members attended the two-hour reception, which hosted 54 Michigan legislators and members of their staffs.

Information tables on each Council workgroup and committee were set up around the hotel's ballroom.

Like this entire issue of Monday Update, these photos are also available on the Council's website at www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil.



Council member meets legislator!



The camaraderie was as good as the food!



Council committees and work groups were well represented.



Legislators love to meet with people from back home in their districts.



Networking and disability issues create an appetite for change!



Sometimes it was almost “standing room only.”



Department of Community Health Director Janet Olszewski (center) visits with policymakers.



Looks as if the gang’s all here. Many groups took photos of their gatherings.



Policymakers often took note during the discussions of state and local issues.



Reception turnout has increased each year since the event began. The atmosphere is casual and productive.



Registration is free for transit riders and consumers, and



Registration is free for transit riders and consumers, and



Registration is free for transit riders and consumers,



The Legislative Reception filled the Lansing Radisson Hotel ballroom to capacity.



Council committee and work group meeting minutes

Here are minutes from recent meetings of the Council's committee and work groups.

Family Support Work Group

January, 2004

Members Present: Abby Wells, Randy Krause, Audrey Craft, Bud Kraft

Members Present by Phone: Aaron Sherbin, Theresa Arini, Vera Graham, Laura Mahank

Welcome and Introductions were done.

Sherbin motioned to approve the November 19, 2003 minutes. Graham seconded. Motion approved.

Sherbin motioned to approve the December 17, 2003 minutes. Krause seconded. Motion approved.

Collaborative work on listserv and website development

Krause said that Yahoo is capable of setting up a listserv at no cost. Contacts and letters will be sent to the following inviting persons to join the listserv.

DD Council family support list, Arc MI, Self-Determination DD Council grants, Bridges4Kids, RICCs, CAUSE, Family Support Network (FSN), PADD at MPAS and others.

Sherbin will look at drafting a release/warning so persons understand any personal comments or information they give is sent to everyone. This language will be placed in initial invitation also.

List the DD Council website address on the invitation – ask that links be sent to Bud or Tracy.

Arini will follow through on the 800 numbers. Wells offered assistance too.

Micro-enterprises were suggested as a link on DD Council website. Van Horn will be given sites to consider for a link.

Kraft will try to do a demo of the DD Council website and listserv at a future meeting.

Name for listserv: Michigan Disability Family Support Listserv.

Bud will invite a speaker from the Detroit 360 Project to discuss FSWG interaction at the 2/18/04 meeting.

The FSWG Work Plan was reviewed.

Tri-fold will be drafted by Wells.
800 numbers
Calendar – Starting with “Watch Me Grow” will be reviewed for accuracy and availability.

Family Resources (Krause)

Kraft will have the calendars available at the 2/18/04 FSWG meeting.

Kraft will discuss with Rick Van Horn the possibility to list county resources on the web page.

Consider a link to the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards for contacts to local CMHs.

Transportation Work Group

January 8, 2004

Members Present: Diane Kempen, Bud Bebee, Tandy Bidinger, Kathy Janego, Terry Hunt, Bud Kraft, Stu Lindsay, Kevin Wisselink

Members Present by Phone:

Marquette: Janice Peterson
Eastern UP: Tonee Therrian
Baraga: Mick Sheridan, Priscilla Whitty, Ben Ransom, Janel LaDante, David Sereno, Carl Mantila, Patty Putala, Lola Manacher
Shiawassee: Mary Arvoy, Larry Alpert, Sharon Brubaker, Christine Ebner, David Jenks, Linda Morovitz, Cynthia Mayhew

Welcome and introductions were done.

Approval of December 11, 2003 minutes.
Approved by consensus.

Legislative Updates:

MDOT Transit Cooperative Research Program

Draft letter to Todd Koopmans, DDC Chairperson regarding transportation of RICC members to council meetings was discussed. Terry and Bud attended the

meeting to discuss the letter. The DNR plane is no longer available to fly U.P. RICC members to Lansing for the DD Council meetings. There is however, a different state plane that is available that has four seats, but is a little more expensive.

The plane is not accessible for persons with disabilities (The DNR plane was also not accessible). RICCs can fly commercial airlines. DD Council provides CRC money for RICC's travel expenses. Time is a factor; weather can also be a problem.

New meeting site today: Shiawassee: The county has Dial-A-Ride which is "demand response." There were 61,000 total riders last year in Shiawassee.

Success Stories:

2003 award for successful collaborative team! Legislators were there to present.

Wisselink, from UCP, improved transportation. Below is his success story:

Last December, funding for public transportation faced a crisis. The state budget was short by \$900 million and some legislators wanted to take part of the deficit from public transportation funding, hurting every transit system in Michigan.

In response, people from all over the state, including many people with disabilities, responded to the calls for action and told their lawmakers that they could not cut transit services.

As a result, legislators were able to come to an agreement that balanced the budget but did not take any funds from public transportation. Because of citizens taking action, transit service in Michigan was preserved.

Janego, The Arc of Livingston, improved transportation. Below is her success story:

In Oct., the Livingston County Transportation Coalition hosted a "State of Public Transportation in Livingston County" luncheon. Special guest included Congressman Mike Rogers, Senator Valde Garcia, and Representatives Chris Ward and Joe Hune. Because I was able to get the "big shooters" to commit, the turn out was huge!

We had many County Commissioners, Mayors, Township Supervisors, just to name a few. This event was a huge success. Due to the success, I feel it was the turning point of our communities "buy in" for the need to continue to improve transportation. Many of these same policy makers are now attending our monthly coalition meetings.

In Dec. 03 the Livingston County Human Services Collaborative Body awarded the 2003 Collaborative Community Team of the Year award to our transportation coalition. This was another big event, lots of press.

We had consumers, again supervisors and commissioners there, and keep in mind, by now some of these same folks are on our coalition. Each coalition participant received two certificates, one from the HSCB, the other was from Senator Garcia, and our 2 Representatives.

Peterson, from Marquette SAIL, helped to make a new terminal accessible.

Shiawassee SATA Award Gen/Shiawassee Workforce Development Award.

Peterson, from Marquette SAIL, helped to make a new terminal accessible.

New allies/partnerships for DD Council TWG was discussed, with Michigan Works it makes sense regionally.

A suggestion was made to have a focus group with staff support, and Janice, Tonee, and Mick to look at the issue of TWG meeting format. At the Baraga site, before or after the larger meeting they ask: What happened to you when you took the bus?

Two consumers per site is required in order to be a teleconference site; however, there are unforeseen events such as illness or bad weather that occasionally prevents consumers from participating that is understandable. If lack of consumer participation continues, we may have to re-evaluate the site.

Multicultural Committee

March, 2004

Present: Vera Graham, Rick Van Horn, Terry Lerma (Chair), Mitzi Allen, Larry Betz, Pam Hall, Vendella Collins, Angela Zamora, Tandy Bidinger.

Agenda:

Agency Updates
Review of Council Work Plans
Transportation Update – Tandy Bidinger
Genesee Plan Update

Meeting was called to order by Pam Hall. There were no February meeting minutes available for review and approval.

Agency Updates. Graham announced that the Council's Family Support Work Group will be conducting the July Council meeting. Van Horn said the producers of the next edition of the Common Disability Agenda

will ask the Multicultural Committee to review copy for cultural sensibilities.

Betz reported working with Pat Cannon and Duncan Wyeth a statewide meeting dealing with ADA compliance. March 30th is the date. Betz also discussed a proactive initiative on accessible housing. The action will be statewide.

Allen told of attending the Lansing Area AIDS Awareness Day last month. She and Hall attended a event in Detroit last month as well.

Hall announced that Yvonne Fleener has joined the staff of the Office of Aging. She added that the Council's Health Issues Work Group would be conducting the Council's April meeting. To support this event, the Multicultural Committee invited Dr. Thomas Gunnings, an East Lansing psychologist, to the April meeting to discuss cultural awareness issues.

Collins emphasized the need for a presenter's subject matter to be tied in with elements of which Council members are aware and tied in with the interests of the committee or work group that is conducting a particular meeting...i.e. in the case of the Health Issues Work Group's April meeting, the speaker/program provided by the Multicultural Committee should center his or her address around health issues. Another example from Collins: if the Transportation Work Group were presenting the Council meeting, then the diversity portion of the meeting would have a transportation flavor about it.

Betz said Dr. Gunnings' areas of expertise are excellent for a presentation at a Council meeting conducted by the Health Issues Work Group. Hall agreed.

Considering committee and work group work plans, Allen said the Committee has been charged to examine other work groups'/committees' plans before tackling the revision of its own plan. This will make the Committee's own work plan writing much easier.

The idea is not to ask a work group/committee to change their work plan to reflect values of diversity, but rather ask "how can the Committee support what you're doing, and take cultural competence to the next level?" Thus, the Committee will tie in its own work plan objectives with those of its sister committees and work groups. Comments on a particular committee's/work group's plan will be sent to the Council Executive Committee for endorsement or return. The ultimate goal is to make the Council responsible to all individuals....people of color and otherwise. However, the Committee must avoid casting itself as the "diversity police."

Allen pointed out that if the Committee wishes to present itself to other committees and work groups as a resource, then its members must be willing to respond to queries and requests by doing research, legwork, etc.

The Committee decided to review the Education Work Group's plan first. At its heart should be a focus on the need for universal education. However, items of concern included the absence of issues dealing with the over-representation of African American children in special education programs.....recognizing that universal education means the absence of special education.....how can children of color fit into universal education? As for the Education Work Group's proposed "universal education summit," the Committee wants to make certain its

organizers include people of color when "identifying critical issue as part of the (summit) theme that will draw people." However, should the Committee examine a work plan item-by-item, or approach it from an overall perspective?

In all cases, committees and work groups must state in their plans a procedure for providing the Multicultural Committee with feedback on efforts toward and successes in cultural competence.

Next, the Committee reviewed the work plan of the Family Support Work Group. A major strategy of the group is "influence policy." Betz observed that one planned activity to "ensure that persons with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders have information they need to access programs/services that can assist them," is to work with a number of groups to "disperse information or provide trainings." The Committee agreed that the selected groups did not suggest any measurable awareness of cultural needs.

Allen pointed out it was the Family Support Work Group that was at the center of the project from several years ago that produced "cultural outreach gatherings" in several Michigan cities to open lines of communication with families of people with disabilities from various cultures. She said the work group should make the data from those gatherings available, to themselves and the other committees/work groups and incorporate this information in the objectives of the work group's work plan. She also raised the idea of "one-stop shopping centers" for people with disabilities. There's a one-year planning grant of \$100,000. The Committee focused on the work group's plan to print and distribute an information booklet...how will this booklet impact diverse families?

Another concern the work group should address is the number of aging caretakers. To do this, invite members of the aging community to become members of the Family Support Work Group.

Allen will type up the suggested changes and e-mail them to members for review before placing them in the minutes. Members, in turn will provide Allen with input on the other work plans for collating and typing.

Bidinger, representing the Transportation Work Group, said its members wish to have multicultural involvement. She invited Committee members to the work group's meetings and provide input for improving that involvement.

Hall said she had been added to the Michigan Department of Transportation's Specialized Services team on behalf of the Office of Services to the Aging.

Public Policy Committee

March 10
10:00 a.m. – 12:00.

Members Present: Jane Spitzley, Robyn Saylor, Tom Stegehuis, Todd Koopmans, Duncan Wyeth, Jane Reagan, Andre Robinson, Bud Kraft, Tandy Bidinger, Rick Van Horn

Welcome and Introductions were done.

Saylor motioned to approve the January 13, 2004 minutes. Spitzley seconded. Motion approved.

Federal Legislation

MiCASSA

Legislation is at the federal level and is not moving currently. The staff will check back with Senator Levin's and Senator Stabenow's office to see if they have decided to support MiCASSA.

No Child Left Behind

There are problems with NCLB. It is very controversial and seems too arbitrary.

IDEA

Reauthorization has not taken place. The proposed new version of IDEA lacks adequate due process protections. There are serious issues regarding discipline. Zero tolerance policies may have had unfair impact on students with DD. Our national organizations seem quiet about the issue.

Medicare Prescription Program

The prescription card will be issued in May. A person cannot be duly eligible. Contact Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP) 1-800-803-7174 for more information. It was suggested to have a speaker from MMAP for a future meeting. Bidinger referred to a handout focusing on the new Medicare prescription drug program.

Social Security

Group reflected of Social Security and the declining economy.

There is not enough social security money to fund the program. New programs such as the Medicaid Buy-In and Ticket to Work are useful to some people.

However, obtaining employment is difficult and may be worrisome for those who have disabilities.

2004 Election

Survey the RICCs regarding local candidates forum. Bush vs. Kerry, the presidential race, as well as local elections.

State Updates

Home Help

Serious concerns remain in “exception” process and with the requirement of needing help with ADL’s to get IADL’s. Family members who want to help cannot be there all of the time. MDRC is collecting stories, as is the Council. One member pays for extra hours from her own pocket.

The committee decided to write another letter about Home Help. They also agreed to keep up efforts to communicate concerns about the program changes to legislators.

Michigan Budget

The transportation budget will be a fight. In one proposal, the Special Services budget stays the same and there is new federal money for new programs.

An estate tax article handout was referred to. Does the Council wish to take action to support revenue enhancements again? Medicaid dental and podiatry may be restored. They may also expand MICHoice, but cut Children’s Special Health Care and children’s managed care plans. It seems to be due to a DCH staffing problem.

Reagan motioned to support revenue enhancements, Robinson seconded. Motion approved. Reagan motioned that the DD Council support revenue enhancements, a letter, etc., Koopmans seconded. Motioned

approved. We will bring this to the Council or do a Rapid Response.

Legislative Reception

Good turnout and response. Koopmans liked the way the event turned out. The weather was bad, but in spite of that over 40 reps or their reps showed up. Reagan liked the event and thought that the workgroup and committee tables were a good idea. Bidinger asks for input/suggestions for next year’s reception. Kraft reminded the group there will be up to 85 new lawmakers next year due to term limits.

Medicaid Policy Revisions

Some are open for public comment; others are for internal comment. We don’t respond to all. We responded on nursing home issues. With the new Adults Benefit Waiver proposal there are concerns about co-pays being too expensive.

We will provide comment on that issue. Some proposed policy changes regarding oxygen use were discussed.

New FIA Director

Udow, the new leader is trying to change things at F.I.A. A member said his caseworker has 35 other cases to work on.

We discussed Michigan and the importation of drugs from Canada. We also covered the possibility of Michigan being able to buy prescription drugs together with other states. There has been no decision on these strategies yet.

Bidinger mentioned the work plan presentation. PPC’s work plan needs a bit more work, as a result of Council member’s comments. Share input for changes. At next

month's PPC meeting we will begin to revise the plan.

Education Work Group

March 16

Members Present: Loreena Parks, Monique Bonifas, Lauri Stein, Marta Hampel, Vera Graham, Glenn Ashley, Jane Spitzely, Bud Kraft

Members Present by Phone: Lynne Tamor, Andre Robinson, Karen Massaro-Mundt, Jane Reagan, Barb Leroy, Cheryl Cormier-Kuhn

Welcome and introductions were done.

Reagan motioned to approve the January 6, 2004 minutes. Graham seconded. Motioned amended. A minor change was made. Motion approved as corrected.

Some past EWG minutes were discussed. There were some comments that were viewed negative. It was suggested to keep comments general in the minutes.

Michigan Kids Count material was discussed. The material will be forwarded to the work group members. The MI Kids Count Report can be found at <http://www.michiganschildren.org/page.cfm/13>.

Tamor motioned to put the Kids Count Report on the agenda for the April meeting. Reagan seconded. Motion approved.

Report on Coalition Presentation to State Board Members was discussed. Four parents spoke at the last State Board of Education meeting. There is a schedule out for next year. All kids in school is the focus of their message. There was one brief referent group

meeting since the last EWG meeting. The Council is represented.

The Parent Registry Bill was discussed. Staff will send a letter to the education committee regarding Bill HB 5044. Cormier-Kuhn motioned to have on the next agenda of the House Education Committee a hearing opportunity to discuss if there are ways to network without breaking confidentiality. Graham seconded. Reagan opposed.

Budget information is needed by April 10 on the Universal Education Summit costs. Preliminary list of potential attendees will be sent by Tamor and forwarded to Lauri Stein, Bud Kraft, Glenn Ashley and Mark McWilliams. Stein will talk with Mark McWilliams to check on facilitators, cost and availability.

Early Childhood Inclusion project is moving toward a marketing plan. They will be asked to come in to speak on April 20 to the EWG.

The Parent Inclusion Network was discussed. There are nine sites now. There will be three more next year. Will be coming back on May 18.